

Marge Ragona

THE COSMIC ADVENTURE

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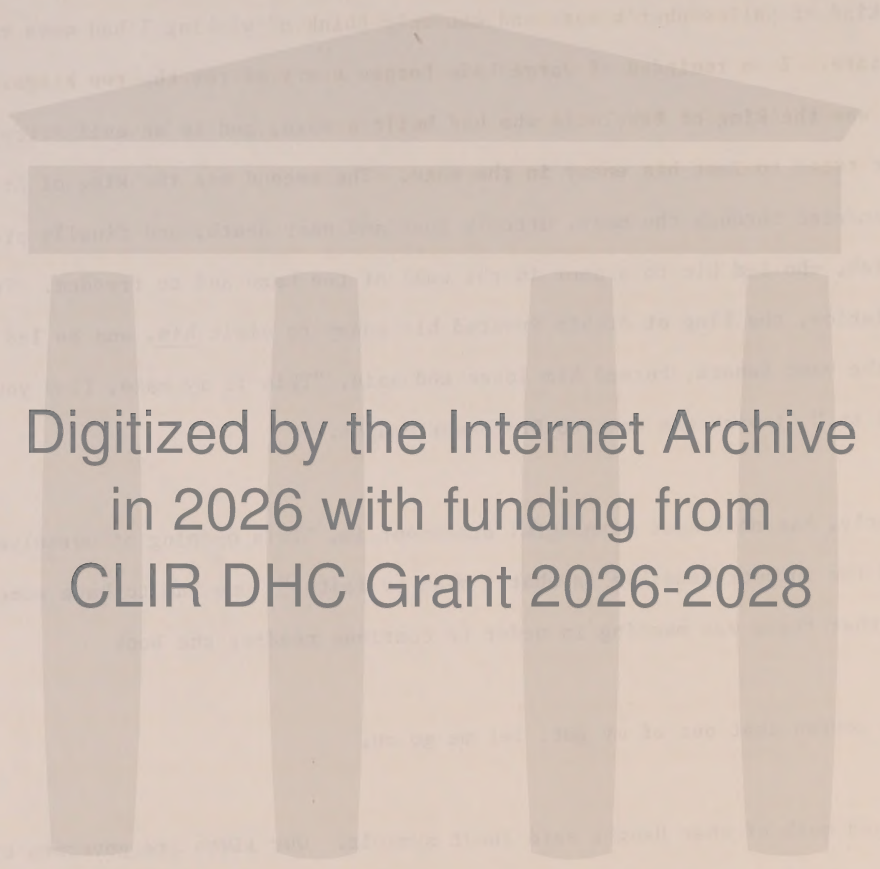
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Obviously, his next most meaningful statement is, "This opening of ourselves toward the incomprehensible is what I mean by faith." One had to have some faith that there was meaning in order to continue reading the book.

Having gotten that out of my gut, let me go on.

I enjoyed much of what Haught said about symbols. Our lives are governed by symbols, what we believe, what we think, how we think, our ability to express most of our ideas are governed by symbols. Scientific language is symbolic, and while I was not impressed by Haught's attempt to lead us through scientific thought, I think three ideas stand out -- each of them scientific terms which are symbolic:

Field: A region of space characterized by a physical property having a determinable value at every point in the region.



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3.

Dimension: Any of the least number of independent coordinates required to specify a point in space uniquely.

System: A group of interacting interrelated or interdependent elements forming a collective entity.

Unfortunately, he left out one more important term which might have allowed him more flexibility with his "hierarchical universe."

Ring: Any of the turns comprising a spiral or helix.

Had he read his mathematics/physics properly he might have seen the universe not at hierarchical, which implies a barrier or space between the layers, but as helical which implies a continuity between the turns of the spiral. His unfortunate choice of the word "hierarchical" for me, at least, destroyed many of his points, because it implied in reality that he was fully committed to an epistemology of control and was unwilling to take, in his wording, "the element of Pascalian wager, the Kierkegaardian leap, the existentialist risk, involved in any renunciation of the epistemology of control." As long as the universe is hierarchical, it is fully in control of those at the top, those who understand most the meaning of that which lies underneath, and which, of course, makes "man" the ultimate understander of all things and therefore in control of them. Sadly, the first half of the book really devastates the second half, because the choice of symbols suggests that there is unbelief in what the second half is saying. This may be purely from the viewpoint of one who reads Mary Daly and may well be pitting the Cosmic Adventure against Gyn-Ecology and Beyond God the Father, but I got awfully tired of the same old proofs of the existence of God couched in new symbolic scientific terminology and Cosmic Mind will never replace my concept of God, and I am not sure that higher is better or that terminology which centers on high, higher, highest is really what Christian belief is all about.

Notwithstanding, the second half of the book has some real value. Two ideas stand out in the chapter on Beauty.

"I think the best way of understanding cosmic purpose...is to propose that it consists essentially in the aim toward beauty."

and

"...the cosmic process (is) one that aims toward the enhancement of consciousness."

Discussing values, Haught proposes that all values must have a purpose and that the purpose of the cosmic process is an urge toward the realization of beauty (p.100). He continues that our current conditioning teaches us that values are moral or ethical and that beauty is a more valid criteria. We are convinced that "if it is not ordered toward the ethical good, it is not purposeful." (p.100), and if everything is measured in terms of moral order, then we are baffled by the chaotic. (And, I might add, the hedonistic.)

Philosophy has always attempted to understand the human striving to order the universe in terms which make it intelligible and Haught places that in context.

"Much of my immediate environment is unintelligible. And as I extend my imagination and questioning beyond my situation outward toward the universe I become even more bewildered by what it is all about. I may be tempted to take my own confusion and project it onto the universe. I may read my own intellectual, moral, and especially aesthetic insensitivity into the cosmos as a whole. I may see the cosmos as lacking purpose"

Or, if I am much more frightened than that, and unwilling to take the Kierkegaardian leap, I may project my fear into a God who creates and orders in a totalitarian fashion because the chaos terrifies me and I am afraid of my own emotions, urges, needs and so I invent a God who forbids those emotions, urges, needs. Ultimately, I reject the theories which suggest that the universe is evolving, changing, and in flux and agree with Bishop Usher that God pointed a

finger and by fiat in seven literal days created a static universe; and then because I am so frightened I demand that everyone adhere to my view of this universe, so that my fears may be comforted by the fact that my belief has been codified into law.

To see God as the source of new possibilities, the world as constantly emerging, "beauty as its own excuse for being" (Emerson: The Rhodora), and a God who allows for drift and play to the cosmos is scary -- or adventuresome (p.121).

For me, the chapter on theodicy was personally wrenching. I pastor in a community which is now asking the question, "Why us?" and dealing with the whole intense concept of theodicy in a personal and immediate manner. AIDS has brought us to a need to deal with the God who creates suffering and why suffering exists. Dualism has taught us that a good God cannot create evil things. Unfortunately, the God of the Old Testament was not such a God, but was the God who created good and evil as well, but as Haught quotes Berdyaev, "God is in the child which has shed tears, and not in the world order by which those tears are said to be justified," and "there is no need to justify, we have no right to justify, all the unhappiness, all the suffering and evil in the world with the help of the idea of God as Providence and Sovereign of the Universe." Kushner, if I read him correctly, finally stated that there was no reason for evil, it just was. "Maybe God does not create our suffering. Maybe it happens for some reason other than the will of God...(and) 'How could God do this to me?' is really the wrong question for us to ask." AIDS is teaching me that something I learned a long time ago is really most pertinent. Corporate evil is far greater than individual evil. Had America not been so homophobic, Christian, and antihedonistic, gay men would not have had to go to Haiti to

revel, and had the Haitian government not been so repressive, and the economy of Haiti so devastated, young men who had gone to Africa to escape the repression and returned disenchanted would not have prostituted themselves and AIDS would have remained a disease of green monkeys. And it has nothing to do with punishment, but a great deal to do with institutional evil. The poor do not willingly place their houses on the side of the volcano which erupts, but because they cannot afford to live elsewhere, nor do they choose to build in the path of the flood, nor where the typhoon will always hit. God has little or nothing to do with it, justice a great deal -- coupled with human stupidity and greed. Only fools would build a university stadium across the San Andreas fault, but greed prompted one university to do so, despite the warning of geologists that they were asking for trouble. The "will of God," and God's penchant for dealing out suffering, I truly am coming to believe, is going to eventually come down to some question of human greed which forced situations in which others suffered. Birth defects, for example, are more common now than they ever were, and this despite greater advances in medicine. But chemicals are added to more things, and we breathe more pollutants, and the soil, the water and the air are no longer fit for humans. And that, dear Father, is not the "will of God." Haught says, "God wills the maximum aesthetic enjoyment relevant to each individual entity, " but we must be receptive to the novelty.

Ibsen, in "An Enemy of the People" tried to tell us about human nature quite a long time ago. Haught says, "Revolutionaries often bring loss of life and property; visionaries are the most disturbing of all people since their entertainment of new possibilities always implies that the present order has to be overcome." Rabbi Kushner states, "Our responding to life's unfairness with sympathy and with righteous indignation (emphasis mine), God's compassion and

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God's anger working through us, may be the surest proof of all of God's reality. The one who sees the unfairness and runs from it screaming that there is no God or denying that the evil ever existed are the ones who eventually "kill the prophets," those who see the same unfairness and decide to do something about it in the name of God.

As we found ourselves discussing a few books back, symbols are potent and are constantly being renewed, refreshed, refurbished, or destroyed. All of religion is symbolic -- everything we say, everything we do, as Haught points out, is symbolic. The Christ is a symbol, Jesus "the man" is a symbol, bread and wine are symbols. "Religious symbolism strives to retrieve a universal dimension of importance that cannot be articulated with mathematical rigor...science and religion are complementary modes of discourse...related to different poles of the perceptive process." Educational philosophy teaches us that there are three realms of mental activity, motor, cognitive, and affective. Science may well reign in the cognitive, but religion has something to say to the affective and what may be provable cognitively, may be much more difficult to prove affectively. Our difficulty, it would seem, is that we attempt to use cognitive tools to prove the affective, but never discuss the affective tools we might turn loose on the cognitively provable. How I feel about what science is doing in the world, for example, is seldom discussed.

What we think, how we think it, and the methods by which we think all embrace symbols. Words have connotative and denotative meaning. Queen may make you see Mary wife of George, but I may say both of those words and giggle, because to me they both have a denotative meaning which is symbolic for my community and a closed symbol system which does not include either George or concrete royalty.

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"Anything can function as a symbol through which the depth, importance and ultimate beauty of reality discloses itself. A person, a group, a historical event, a word or a set of words, an animal, a rock, a dream etc. -- any of these is capable of functioning symbolically, of mediating to us a purposefulness that transcends us and gives significance to our lives."

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"Through a specific set of narrative symbols ultimate meaning has already comprehended our consciousness and stimulated our reflection in the direction of conceiving the universe in a hierarchical (that unfortunate word --MFR) fashion.

What I interpret him trying to say is that through our symbols we catch glimpses of the a universal power and a unifying thought which leads to conceptions of ultimate meaning. It is as though we have caught on to the helix, and as it spins and circles we catch a glimpse of something further along that bends and turns and always advances, and circles need not be vicious, they may merely be "rings."

We do not have to prove the existence of God -- any more than we need to prove the existence of the wind. We see it in action and we know that it can move a windmill, a sail, spin a toy or devastate a community. So can God, but in the devastation people catch a glimpse of God as the "silent horizon of their actuality, as the source of their intrinsic order, as the lure summoning them toward self-transcendence (or self actualization-MFR) and , finally, as the care into which their existence is ultimately synthesized." It is that integration of good and evil that is so compelling, and Haught points out that Jesus parabolically points out the paradoxes: The holy one "embraces tax collectors, prostitutes, rich and poor, the socially respectable as well as the socially rejected, women as well as men, children and adults, heretics along with the orthodox, the sick and the healthy...a father embracing a prodigal son, a tax

collector praying for forgiveness; a heretic showing a compassion far surpassing that of the orthodox, an employer rewarding laggards with the same wages as those who have worked a full day." The dominion of God is not concerned with morality! It is concerned with justice and eschatology. God loved the world unconditionally, good and evil alike. And Haught points out that God embraces suffering and death and weeps with the "crucified man" to proclaim that "omnipotence empties itself and takes the form of utter weakness and helplessness."

That is not hierarchichal thinking, and I wish Haught had come up with a better word. Mine is helical, and I believe that Christianity is helical and God is part of the helix, and it is no accident that we all living things are defined by a double helix and Haught misses what could have been a central thought in his book by failing to identify the genetic helix with God. Symbolic thinking leads us to new symbols and outmodes old ones, possibly in the new science we may discover new symbols that will enhance our quest for the really real and the ultimately meaningful in a way that will remind us of what the Christ really was like and what was symbolized by the incarnational act of God in leaving the realm of power and taking on human powerlessness to unify both and lessen the gap between them.

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*The search for better ways to talk about it
will and must go on forever.*

Continuing a solid point.

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*Excellent suggestion for over-improved symbols.
The helix is certainly one which now attracts
the scientific and the 'liberal arts' mind.*

academic and popular presentations of scientific discoveries. The epistemology of control still reigns. The consequence of this attitude is that it rules out in principle any possibility of there being a more comprehensive dimension transcending the level of our own minds. As Smith says, "To expect a transcendental object to appear on a viewing screen wired by an epistemology that is set for control would be tantamount to expecting color to appear on a television screen that was built for black and white."¹²

Faith

There is an alternative mode of cognition that instead of being dominated by the impulse to control is a product of a desire to surrender to the possible mysteriousness of reality. The name we may give to this type of consciousness is faith. Faith as surrender to mystery has little meaning outside of the context of a hierarchical universe. But in an emergent, hierarchical universe faith is the kind of knowing whereby we at the human level of evolution leave ourselves open to being grasped by a more encompassing field of influence.¹³ In the cosmic hierarchy the lower cannot comprehend the higher. But the lower can *leave itself open* to being harnessed and organized by a higher principle.¹⁴ Physico-chemical processes leave themselves open to being ordered by biotic principles. Life processes leave themselves open to being ordered by mental or human processes. Faith, in the context of an emergent universe, is simply the stance that we at the human level of emergence would take when we surrender ourselves to being influenced by whatever higher field there may be encompassing the cosmic hierarchy. The fact that this higher field of influence does not show up on our screens wired by the impulse to control is insufficient warrant for us to banish the possibility of its reality. If there is a teleological aspect to our universe its presence would not be detectable by the controlling techniques of scientific method. Instead it would only make itself known to minds which have opened themselves to being ordered or influenced

by the higher dimension. *This opening of ourselves toward the incomprehensible is what I mean by faith.*

I realize that I have enormously oversimplified the notion of faith here. Much more is involved, and different contexts would require our accentuating other aspects of faith. My main concern here, though, is simply to situate faith in the context of an emergent universe, to understand faith cosmologically rather than psychologically. And in such a context I would understand it not as a dogmatic posture but as an exploratory dimension of the emergent cosmos itself. Through faith the evolutionary universe at the hominized level reaches out for and opens itself up to a more comprehensive dimension. What the final result of this self-surrender will be we have no definitive way of knowing. We can only imagine it symbolically. Religious symbols and myths throughout the ages have been one, but only one, way in which our consciousness has allowed the transcendent to take root in, to dwell in and rely upon, our human level of emergence. I understand faith as a much broader term than religion, though. And I think faith is present in movements and individuals that are not "religious" in any conventional sense of the term. Wherever there is an exploratory openness to the new, together with a humble abandonment of the will to subject the universe to the contours of our own limited intellects, there is faith. *There is an element of the Pascalian wager, the Kierkegaardian leap, the existentialist risk, involved in any renunciation of the epistemology of control.* There is the Abrahamic willingness to set forth into lands unknown, a surrender to the possibility that our lives and minds may be given a meaning by something infinitely larger than themselves. To accept the possibility of a purposeful universe is not as easy as its critics suggest. In fact the surrender of faith is a painful one. It requires our leaving behind the familiar contours of the world we think we have objectively mastered. It demands that we commit ourselves to the adventure of exploratory hope. Such a commitment has never been easy.

Marge Ragona

THE COSMIC ADVENTURE

For me, this book begins on Page 96, the point at which Haught says "There is an alternate mode of cognition...The name we may give to this type of consciousness is faith."

From there the book begins to make sense. I am sorry that he felt the necessity to spend 95 pages taking us on a tour of 17th century scientism and its profound effects on modern day philosophy of religion and philosophy of science. But that he did so, and his reasons for doing so, are ultimately of no real value to this book. He could have, with the addition of a paragraph at various places, inserted explanatory comments into the material, which would have obviated the necessity for the 95 wasted pages.

Haught, I presume, included his own book when he discussed his philosophy of literature by suggesting that ..."

several episodes are independently developed early in the novel in such a way that they seem to have nothing to do with each other. Taken in themselves these fragments may appear either boring or unintelligible. I may find it a torture to go through them and may even be tempted to overlook them altogether. Yet by the time I reach the end of the novel I am glad I took the time to explore them. For in the final analysis the episodes which in themselves seemed monotonous or unintelligibly complex now enhance my appreciation of the novel as a whole. They have a significance and a connectedness when viewed from a wider perspective that they do not appear to have when I am too close to them.

I, for one, resent having to read 95 pages of stuff which relates only tangentially to the premise of the book. Unfortunately, the ethics of "publish or perish" and the decisions surrounding what makes a book a book are not always those of the purchaser of same. Still, my anger and sense of outrage at the 95 pages I had to wade through before coming to the book's premise distorted my feeling about the rest of the book, and I would have enjoyed reading Haught's book and felt closer affinity with it had the first 95 pages been reduced to a

2.

comprehensible chapter in readable English without the terminological barriers he erected and the hurdles he placed for the reader to leap over. I dislike this kind of philosopher's maze and can only think of wishing I had ways to retaliate. I am reminded of Jorge Luis Borges story of the the two kings. The first was the king of Babylonia who had built a maze, and in an evil attempt at murder tried to lose his enemy in the maze. The second was the king of Arabia, who wandered through the maze, utterly lost and near death, and finally prayed to Allah, who led him to a door in the wall of the maze and to freedom. In retaliation, the king of Arabia invited his enemy to visit him, and he led him into the vast Sahara, turned him loose and said, "This is my maze, find your way out of it." I wish the same to Professor Haught.

Obviously, his next most meaningful statement is, "This opening of ourselves toward the incomprehensible is what I mean by faith." One had to have some faith that there was meaning in order to continue reading the book.

Having gotten that out of my gut, let me go on.

I enjoyed much of what Haught said about symbols. Our lives are governed by symbols, what we believe, what we think, how we think, our ability to express most of our ideas are governed by symbols. Scientific language is symbolic, and while I was not impressed by Haught's attempt to lead us through scientific thought, I think three ideas stand out -- each of them scientific terms which are symbolic:

Field: A region of space characterized by a physical property having a determinable value at every point in the region.

3.

Dimension: Any of the least number of independent coordinates required to specify a point in space uniquely.

System: A group of interacting interrelated or interdependent elements forming a collective entity.

Unfortunately, he left out one more important term which might have allowed him more flexibility with his "hierarchical universe."

Ring: Any of the turns comprising a spiral or helix.

Had he read his mathematics/physics properly he might have seen the universe not at hierarchical, which implies a barrier or space between the layers, but as helical which implies a continuity between the turns of the spiral. His unfortunate choice of the word "hierarchical" for me, at least, destroyed many of his points, because it implied in reality that he was fully committed to an epistemology of control and was unwilling to take, in his wording, "the element of Pascalian wager, the Kierkegaardian leap, the existentialist risk, involved in any renunciation of the epistemology of control." As long as the universe is hierarchical, it is fully in control of those at the top, those who understand most the meaning of that which lies underneath, and which, of course, makes "man" the ultimate understander of all things and therefore in control of them. Sadly, the first half of the book really devastates the second half, because the choice of symbols suggests that there is unbelief in what the second half is saying. This may be purely from the viewpoint of one who reads Mary Daly and may well be pitting the Cosmic Adventure against Gyn-Ecology and Beyond God the Father, but I got awfully tired of the same old proofs of the existence of God couched in new symbolic scientific terminology and Cosmic Mind will never replace my concept of God, and I am not sure that higher is better or that terminology which centers on high, higher, highest is really what Christian belief is all about.

Notwithstanding, the second half of the book has some real value. Two ideas stand out in the chapter on Beauty.

"I think the best way of understanding cosmic purpose...is to propose that it consists essentially in the aim toward beauty."

and

"...the cosmic process (is) one that aims toward the enhancement of consciousness."

Discussing values, Haught proposes that all values must have a purpose and that the purpose of the cosmic process is an urge toward the realization of beauty (p.100). He continues that our current conditioning teaches us that values are moral or ethical and that beauty is a more valid criteria. We are convinced that "if it is not ordered toward the ethical good, it is not purposeful." (p.100), and if everything is measured in terms of moral order, then we are baffled by the chaotic. (And, I might add, the hedonistic.)

Philosophy has always attempted to understand the human striving to order the universe in terms which make it intelligible and Haught places that in context.

"Much of my immediate environment is unintelligible. And as I extend my imagination and questioning beyond my situation outward toward the universe I become even more bewildered by what it is all about. I may be tempted to take my own confusion and project it onto the universe. I may read my own intellectual, moral, and especially aesthetic insensitivity into the cosmos as a whole. I may see the cosmos as lacking purpose"

Or, if I am much more frightened than that, and unwilling to take the Kierkegaardian leap, I may project my fear into a God who creates and orders in a totalitarian fashion because the chaos terrifies me and I am afraid of my own emotions, urges, needs and so I invent a God who forbids those emotions, urges, needs. Ultimately, I reject the theories which suggest that the universe is evolving, changing, and in flux and agree with Bishop Usher that God pointed a

finger and by fiat in seven literal days created a static universe; and then because I am so frightened I demand that everyone adhere to my view of this universe, so that my fears may be comforted by the fact that my belief has been codified into law.

To see God as the source of new possibilities, the world as constantly emerging, "beauty as its own excuse for being" (Emerson: The Rhodora), and a God who allows for drift and play to the cosmos is scary -- or adventuresome (p.121).

For me, the chapter on theodicy was personally wrenching. I pastor in a community which is now asking the question, "Why us?" and dealing with the whole intense concept of theodicy in a personal and immediate manner. AIDS has brought us to a need to deal with the God who creates suffering and why suffering exists. Dualism has taught us that a good God cannot create evil things. Unfortunately, the God of the Old Testament was not such a God, but was the God who created good and evil as well, but as Haught quotes Berdyaev, "God is in the child which has shed tears, and not in the world order by which those tears are said to be justified," and "there is no need to justify, we have no right to justify, all the unhappiness, all the suffering and evil in the world with the help of the idea of God as Providence and Sovereign of the Universe." Kushner, if I read him correctly, finally stated that there was no reason for evil, it just was. "Maybe God does not create our suffering. Maybe it happens for some reason other than the will of God...(and) 'How could God do this to me?' is really the wrong question for us to ask." AIDS is teaching me that something I learned a long time ago is really most pertinent. Corporate evil is far greater than individual evil. Had America not been so homophobic, Christian, and antihedonistic, gay men would not have had to go to Haiti to

revel, and had the Haitian government not been so repressive, and the economy of Haiti so devastated, young men who had gone to Africa to escape the repression and returned disenchanted would not have prostituted themselves and AIDS would have remained a disease of green monkeys. And it has nothing to do with punishment, but a great deal to do with institutional evil. The poor do not willingly place their houses on the side of the volcano which erupts, but because they cannot afford to live elsewhere, nor do they choose to build in the path of the flood, nor where the typhoon will always hit. God has little or nothing to do with it, justice a great deal -- coupled with human stupidity and greed. Only fools would build a university stadium across the San Andreas fault, but greed prompted one university to do so, despite the warning of geologists that they were asking for trouble. The "will of God," and God's penchant for dealing out suffering, I truly am coming to believe, is going to eventually come down to some question of human greed which forced situations in which others suffered. Birth defects, for example, are more common now than they ever were, and this despite greater advances in medicine. But chemicals are added to more things, and we breathe more pollutants, and the soil, the water and the air are no longer fit for humans. And that, dear Father, is not the "will of God." Haught says, "God wills the maximum aesthetic enjoyment relevant to each individual entity, " but we must be receptive to the novelty. Ibsen, in "An Enemy of the People" tried to tell us about human nature quite a long time ago. Haught says, "Revolutionaries often bring loss of life and property; visionaries are the most disturbing of all people since their entertainment of new possibilities always implies that the present order has to be overcome." Rabbi Kushner states, "Our responding to life's unfairness with sympathy and with righteous indignation (emphasis mine), God's compassion and

God's anger working through us, may be the surest proof of all of God's reality. The one who sees the unfairness and runs from it screaming that there is no God or denying that the evil ever existed are the ones who eventually "kill the prophets," those who see the same unfairness and decide to do something about it in the name of God.

As we found ourselves discussing a few books back, symbols are potent and are constantly being renewed, refreshed, refurbished, or destroyed. All of religion is symbolic -- everything we say, everything we do, as Haught points out, is symbolic. The Christ is a symbol, Jesus "the man" is a symbol, bread and wine are symbols. "Religious symbolism strives to retrieve a universal dimension of importance that cannot be articulated with mathematical rigor...science and religion are complementary modes of discourse...related to different poles of the perceptive process." Educational philosophy teaches us that there are three realms of mental activity, motor, cognitive, and affective. Science may well reign in the cognitive, but religion has something to say to the affective and what may be provable cognitively, may be much more difficult to prove affectively. Our difficulty, it would seem, is that we attempt to use cognitive tools to prove the affective, but never discuss the affective tools we might turn loose on the cognitively provable. How I feel about what science is doing in the world, for example, is seldom discussed.

What we think, how we think it, and the methods by which we think all embrace symbols. Words have connotative and denotative meaning. Queen may make you see Mary wife of George, but I may say both of those words and giggle, because to me they both have a denotative meaning which is symbolic for my community and a closed symbol system which does not include either George or concrete royalty.

Haught says,

"Anything can function as a symbol through which the depth, importance and ultimate beauty of reality discloses itself. A person, a group, a historical event, a word or a set of words, an animal, a rock, a dream etc. -- any of these is capable of functioning symbolically, of mediating to us a purposefulness that transcends us and gives significance to our lives."

He goes on

"Through a specific set of narrative symbols ultimate meaning has already comprehended our consciousness and stimulated our reflection in the direction of conceiving the universe in a hierarchical (that unfortunate word --MFR) fashion.

What I interpret him trying to say is that through our symbols we catch glimpses of the a universal power and a unifying thought which leads to conceptions of ultimate meaning. It is as though we have caught on to the helix, and as it spins and circles we catch a glimpse of something further along that bends and turns and always advances, and circles need not be vicious, they may merely be "rings."

We do not have to prove the existence of God -- any more than we need to prove the existence of the wind. We see it in action and we know that it can move a windmill, a sail, spin a toy or devastate a community. So can God, but in the devastation people catch a glimpse of God as the "silent horizon of their actuality, as the source of their intrinsic order, as the lure summoning them toward self-transcendence (or self actualization-MFR) and , finally, as the care into which their existence is ultimately synthesized." It is that integration of good and evil that is so compelling, and Haught points out that Jesus parabolically points out the paradoxes: The holy one "embraces tax collectors, prostitutes, rich and poor, the socially respectable as well as the socially rejected, women as well as men, children and adults, heretics along with the orthodox, the sick and the healthy...a father embracing a prodigal son, a tax

collector praying for forgiveness; a heretic showing a compassion far surpassing that of the orthodox, an employer rewarding laggards with the same wages as those who have worked a full day." The dominion of God is not concerned with morality! It is concerned with justice and eschatology. God loved the world unconditionally, good and evil alike. And Haught points out that God embraces suffering and death and weeps with the "crucified man" to proclaim that "omnipotence empties itself and takes the form of utter weakness and helplessness."

That is not hierarchichal thinking, and I wish Haught had come up with a better word. Mine is helical, and I believe that Christianity is helical and God is part of the helix, and it is no accident that we all living things are defined by a double helix and Haught misses what could have been a central thought in his book by failing to identify the genetic helix with God. Symbolic thinking leads us to new symbols and outmodes old ones, possibly in the new science we may discover new symbols that will enhance our quest for the really real and the ultimately meaningful in a way that will remind us of what the Christ really was like and what was symbolized by the incarnational act of God in leaving the realm of power and taking on human powerlessness to unify both and lessen the gap between them.

Haught's book had a horrendous beginning, but a WOW of an ending.

8.

Beauty

In the previous chapter I suggested that the possibility of purpose in the universe may be understood in terms of a hierarchical conception of the cosmos. It was especially Michael Polanyi's thought that provided the central ideas I developed there. In this chapter I shall fall back upon aspects of Whitehead's philosophy once again in order to provide yet another way of thinking of our universe in teleological terms. In both instances the kind of teleology being proposed is what must be called a "loose" teleology. I use this expression, another which I have taken over from Polanyi, in order to distance my approach from the restrictive opinion that the universe has built into it some rigidly pre-determined destiny.¹

Let me state what I mean by a loose teleology in rather simple terms. If our universe were to start all over again with the Big Bang there is no need to hold that it would have unfolded in its evolution in a manner anything like the present one. The role of chance and indeterminacy, the specific choices of the natural selection process, and even possible alternative sets of physical laws would have caused a quite different world to evolve. Or if we were to turn back the evolutionary clock two billion years and reconstruct the "primordial soups" from which the molecules of life were fashioned, we would have no guarantee that eventually there would have been fish, reptiles, birds, monkeys, or . . . humans. There is no necessity that evolution take one and only one course.² What does seem quite possible, though, is that the cosmos would still have embarked

upon a course of complexification. There still might have been a straining toward the further realization of more intensely complex arrangements of physical reality. In other words our universe would still have been an adventure of evolution. But there is no a priori necessity that the cosmos have developed in one particular fashion. That it aim toward more intense forms of ordered novelty may be a metaphysical necessity, even if the actualization of this aim is often frustrated. But it is not essential for cosmic teleology that the universe have arrived at precisely this present state of evolution.

I think the best way of understanding cosmic purpose in our loose sense is to propose that it consists essentially in the aim toward beauty.³ Perhaps from the limitedness of our own perspective we can say no more, but at least we can say this much. An aesthetic notion of cosmic purpose is capable of embracing the mythic and religious representations of human aspiration as well as accommodating the modern scientific understanding of the universe. An aesthetic rendition of cosmic teleology allows us to speak of a pervasive cosmic aim without having to be too restrictive in specifying the exact goal toward which cosmic process may be oriented.

Within this very broad scheme centering on the notion of beauty it is still possible to entertain more specific proposals as to the ultimate meaning of things. For example, a number of teleological theories attempt to understand the cosmic process as one that aims toward the enhancement of consciousness.⁴ I have no objection to this teleological perspective. And there is increasing evidence from the sciences that our universe has evolved from rudimentary toward more intensely conscious structures. However, I shall attempt to show that an aesthetic reading of cosmic purpose is more comprehensive than consciousness-oriented teleologies (such as that of Teilhard de Chardin). It is more comprehensive since it takes into account more caringly those segments of cosmic process that appear to us to be regressive, to move away from further enhancement of consciousness and away from the ideals we set up for our human existence. The universe is not in every way directional in the manner we would perhaps like it to be. Thus if we are to

speak of cosmic purpose in a plausible way we must remain fully cognizant of the meandering and confusing nature of its evolutionary trajectory. I think an aesthetic perspective is comprehensive enough to accommodate and salvage all the waywardness of this evolutionary complexity.

The purpose of the cosmos, then, is its aim toward beauty. How would such an aim render the cosmic process purposeful? In response to this question we must point out first of all that beauty is a value.⁵ And it is the struggle to realize value that makes any process purposeful. Thus if the cosmic process is dominated by an urge toward realization of beauty, it may be called purposeful. The question though is whether and how we can understand value in aesthetic terms. We are so conditioned to think of value in moral or ethical terms that we may be bewildered by any attempt to express ultimate value in terms of criteria of beauty.⁶

When critics of teleology reject the idea of purpose in the universe their suspicions are almost always framed according to ethical criteria. For these critics the universe is condemned for not corresponding in its behavior to that of the ethical person: therefore, it is not good. If it is not ordered toward the ethical good, then it is not purposeful. In its evolution it displays a marked disregard for life, allowing all living beings and species eventually to pass into oblivion; and in its relentless laws of inertia and natural selection it exhibits crude indifference toward the dignity of persons. Nature seems to operate more by caprice, indifference or malice than by concern for its children. Its cruel experimenting with various forms of life in order eventually to discard them certainly makes it less than an adequate model for our own conduct. This is why Bertrand Russell says that the universe is unworthy of us. Our own goodness far outshines that of the universe in which we live. How can such a universe be purposeful?⁷

If we were to evaluate the universe purely in terms of ethical criteria of value we might be tempted toward cosmic pessimism. Even according to such ethical criteria, however, I think in all fairness we have to acknowledge the extent to which the universe also manifests what we may call "care." For

the most part the universe sustains us instead of crushing us. Although the evidence is not unambiguous there is an aura of sustenance throughout nature. There are catastrophes of course, resulting from the varying degrees of hierarchical independence of one level from another. But more remarkable than these episodes of chaos is the overall environing affirmation given to species and individuals. We cannot overlook this fact nor fail in gratitude toward it.⁸

Even after making this qualification, however, I think that it is a mistake to argue for cosmic purpose on the grounds that the cosmos conforms to our ethical ideal of care. For the fact is that this care is not all-pervasive. There are no guarantees for our safety. There is tragedy, suffering and death. There are logical and ethical contradictions in our worldly experience. There are the absurd oppositions existing between life and death, growth and decay, pleasure and pain, ecstasy and sorrow, light and darkness, good and evil, order and chaos. It would be naive to build a cosmological perspective without acknowledging these tragic conflicts.

The problem with the ethical perspective is that it cannot deal with these contradictions as such. It measures everything in terms of moral order and remains baffled by the chaotic. On the other hand an aesthetic perspective is quite at home in the realm of contradictions, for its very nature allows it to transform them into a harmony of contrasts. And I shall propose that the caring aspect of the cosmic process can be better expressed in aesthetic than in ethical terms. Although, no doubt, an aesthetic understanding of cosmic order is less than adequate also, I think that it is superior to and broader than the ethical model as an approach to understanding what may be meant by cosmic order or purpose.

Aesthetic Value

When we use the term "aesthetic" we are talking about beauty. Is it possible to put into words why things strike us as beautiful and why some things strike as more beautiful than

others? Whitehead's thought provides the concepts for just such a clarification.⁹ First of all, beauty entails a synthesis of contrasts. Without contrasting elements there is sheer monotony, and monotony is not beautiful. At the same time beauty implies a resolution of contradiction or conflict, that is, it requires a harmoniousness or order that overrules chaos. When elements in a painting, poem or musical composition clash so as to destroy overall harmoniousness then the aesthetic quality of the work of art is diminished or lost. Therefore, we call beautiful any expression, entity or experience that transforms or resolves contradictions into contrasts. In order for such a resolution to take place, however, the conflicting elements must be situated within a framework of harmony that transcends and, therefore, softens the local clash of contradictory aspects. Within such a wider framework the localized disharmony can become a nuance that enriches the whole instead of a clash that destroys it.

Beauty, we have said, requires a harmony of contrasts. But at times the harmony may tend to overrule the contrast and melt it down to homogeneity. When this occurs beauty has given way to monotony. The beautiful is threatened on two sides, by chaos on one side and monotony or triviality on the other. Beauty is a balancing act between the extremes of chaos and banality. It is precarious, and therefore is precious. Beauty is a synthesis of harmony and complexity, order and novelty, stability and motion, form and dynamics.

Beauty is a harmony of contrasts. Let me illustrate this point beginning with a very simple example. When I simultaneously strike two adjacent keys on a piano the half-note interval between them causes a rather disharmonious, even unpleasant and unsatisfying sound to emerge. The sound amounts more to "noise" than to harmony, and so I would refrain from calling it beautiful. However, if in the course of playing a musical composition I strike the same two keys again simultaneously, then their local dissonance may actually contribute to the overall aesthetic intensity of the whole piece. The orderly patterning of sounds that makes up the whole musical

composition resolves the local contradiction (dissonance) into an aesthetically satisfying contrast. This resolution of contradiction into contrast is of the essence of beauty.

A second example may be taken from the art of painting. If I were to isolate a small segment of a great painting (say a few square inches) and prescind momentarily from the whole canvas, I would find in the fragment shades of color, texture and theme that added up to chaos or to monotony. In its isolation I would not find the fragment aesthetically satisfying. But when I resituate this isolated segment back onto the whole painting I find that its formerly chaotic or monotonous qualities are resolved by the overall harmony and nuance into factors that contribute to the aesthetic value of the whole. A wider perspective can transform locally unaesthetic elements into aesthetic ones. There is no reason for us to reject the possibility that in a similar way the chaotic and monotonous episodes of all experience, ours as well as nature's in general, may also contribute to the value of the whole when viewed from a cosmic perspective (to which of course we do not ourselves have access).

A third example may be derived from literature. In reading a novel I may find that several episodes are independently developed early in the novel in such a way that they seem to have nothing to do with each other. Taken in themselves these fragments may appear either boring or unintelligible. I may find it a torture to go through them and may even be tempted to overlook them altogether. Yet by the time I reach the end of the novel I am glad I took the time to explore them. For in the final analysis the episodes which in themselves seemed monotonous or unintelligibly complex now enhance my appreciation of the novel as a whole. They have a significance and a connectedness when viewed from a wider perspective that they do not appear to have when I am too close to them.

Now from the Whiteheadian point of view the cosmos is such an aesthetic reality. Both in its constituent occasions and in its overall reality the universe is a process of synthesizing and unifying its composite aspects into novel moments of present aesthetic "enjoyment." As each occasion feels its past it

Conclusion

The beauty toward which the universe strives is enough to imbue it with purpose. Yet from the limited vantage point that I occupy in this evolving world it often seems that discord is more prominent than harmony. Much of my immediate environment is unintelligible. And as I extend my imagination and questioning beyond my situation outward toward the universe I become even more bewildered by what it is all about. I may be tempted to take my own confusion and project it onto the universe. I may read my own intellectual, moral, and especially aesthetic insensitivity into the cosmos as a whole. I may see the cosmos as lacking purpose.

However, the aesthetic model of cosmic purpose suggests that my own experience may be lacking in perspective. Perhaps there is a vantage point on the universe that I do not have, given the confines of my own extremely limited situation. I cannot exclude the possibility that my own experience is only an infinitesimal segment of a universal canvas, only a fragmentary movement in a cosmic composition, a brief episode in nature's narrative. For perhaps there is a wider angle of vision on the universe to which I do not myself have access. Perhaps this wider perspective, lying hierarchically above my own level of comprehension, is able to unify into an aesthetic whole those contradictions, monotonies and absurdities that I deem most insurmountable. Perhaps from this perspective my life has a significance, a purpose, a meaning which I cannot grasp hold of in a controlling manner. Perhaps, though, if I risk the surrender to such a possibility I may feel, even here and now, a portion of the peace that comes with the resolution of contradictions into contrasts. I may feel perhaps only briefly and episodically the beauty toward which the universe tends, the beauty of which I am only a small but significant part.

Helical
rather than
hierarchical

H. is so
modern
centered

9.

Permanence and Perishing

I suggested in the previous chapter that an aesthetic perspective on the cosmos is better able to support the religious view that all is ultimately cared for than are the usually employed ethical criteria for evaluating things. From our finite standpoint we are tempted to demand that the universe conform to our "high" standards of moral order. And when we find that neither we nor the other species in evolution are treated according to these standards we are inclined to indict the universe for its moral indifference. Thence we may be inclined to reject any intrinsic cosmic meaning and set up ourselves as superior to this uncaring world.

Such an indictment, I am arguing, comes prematurely (though understandably and forgivably). It is a judgment made on the basis of our limited moralistic apprehension of order with the implicit demand that the totality of cosmic reality conform to this particular order. A classic instance of the demand that the universe adjust itself to our human calculation of order may be found in Dostoevski's novel, *The Brothers Karamazov*. There Ivan rejects this universe since it does not fit the contours of his "Euclidean" reason, which Ivan takes to be the final measure of things. The simple fact that innocent children suffer, and therefore that the ethical value of justice is violated, is enough to prove the overall incongruity and absurdity of this universe. Hence Ivan would respectfully return his

The world in its constituent occasions has a feel for the realm of new possibilities held out to it by God. In each moment's aesthetic "enjoyment" and "remembering" of the past it is also shaped by an influx of novelty from the transcending field of possibilities. For the most part the experiential occasions (such as those in the inorganic world) are only minimally affected by the reservoir of novelty. And so their mode of inheritance is largely one of conformity to the past, that is to say, of efficient causation. Occasionally, however, the pressure of the possible breaks through the routines of repetition and new schemes of recurrence gain a foothold in the cosmic process. Novelty insinuates itself more dramatically into the stream of becoming, allowing for the emergence of new levels of being in which there is a greater degree of sensitivity to final causation, that is, more freedom to respond to the cosmic aim of Beauty and Peace.³

In this sense the world is not only felt by God's aesthetic care; it also feels God as the source of new possibilities. In the mode of being felt by the world, God lures the cosmic process toward further intensification of beauty. God offers to the world, however, only those possibilities that are relevant to it at any particular phase of its becoming. For example, after the macromolecules of amino acids or nucleic acids have become sufficiently abundant, the possibility of living cells becomes a relevant new form of ordered novelty in the world's advance. But the possibility of life would not have been relevant, say, when the earth was still a seething ball of fire. Similarly, the evolution of man would have been out of place prior to the emergence of primates. In God's primordial nature there is a "grading" of the infinite variety of possibilities so that only some are applicable to each occasion's enjoyment. And even here the occasion has a "freedom" to decide which of these possibilities will be included in or excluded from its unique moment of satisfaction.

In the mode of being felt, God does not force the world to fall in line with the relevant possibilities offered to it. As we noted in Chapter 6, the world has to have an aspect of indeterminacy at every level in order for it to be a world at all.

Otherwise it would be a mere extension of God's own being. Thus the world is not compelled to pattern itself rigidly and immediately according to the shape of the relevant possibilities presented to it by God. There is room for flexibility and meandering in its response to the persuasion of its creative ground. The "principle of uncertainty" points to an indeterminacy at the level of the physical, and biology speaks of randomness at the level of life. At the conscious level the world's indeterminacy takes the form of human freedom, where persons are not compelled to follow the lure of value rooted in beauty, but may instead opt for either monotony or confusion. And at the level of civilization, we know how easy it is for the world to drift away from intense forms of ordered novelty. At all levels of the cosmic hierarchy there is at least some degree of "freedom".

Such a view of the world is not necessarily a comforting one. And it is natural for us to feel uneasy with the notion of a God who allows such a degree of "play" and "drift" to the cosmos. But I shall suggest in this chapter that the God of aesthetic care, a God of love, is also a God of adventure who does not coerce but rather persuades the world toward its fulfillment. In such a world our being ultimately cared for is not the same as a guarantee of safety. Salvation in an aesthetic scheme is not the same as being secured within a universal harmony structured according to ethical criteria. I shall approach this position by entering more explicitly into the problem of theodicy than I have done up to this point.

In the previous chapter I attempted to show how the evil of perishing is overcome by the aesthetic care of God's feeling the world and sustaining its experiences in an unfading immediacy. If God is in some way like what Whitehead calls a "fellow sufferer," however, we would still have only one aspect of a theodicy, that is, only part of a response to the "problem of evil." For just as pressing is that dimension of the theodicy problem which asks why suffering, perishing, and evil are allowed to occur in the first place. It is to this question that any reflection on the idea of God, in whatever context, eventually has to return.

interpret our suffering as God's way of teaching us important lessons. According to this solution,

... God treats us the way a wise and caring parent treats a naive child, keeping us from hurting ourselves, withholding something we may want, punishing us occasionally to make sure we understand that we have done something seriously wrong, and patiently enduring our temper tantrums at His "unfairness" in the confidence that we will one day mature and understand that it was all for our own good. "For whom the Lord loves, He chastises; even as a father does to the son he loves." (Proverbs 3:12)⁹

In this divine pedagogy God inflicts suffering on us in order to help us, and this is sufficient justification for our pain.

Kushner replies that this kind of theodicy tries to justify God, but it does nothing to alleviate concrete suffering. Kushner's objections are like those of Jürgen Moltmann, a Christian theologian, who has also clarified the flaw involved in any such theodicy. The danger is that it gives a place to suffering in the total scheme of things and thus subtly legitimates it, making us reluctant to challenge its apparent metaphysical inevitability. The bottom line of any theodicy must be the alleviation of suffering. The theodicies of punishment and pedagogy, however, do not directly attack suffering but leave the sufferer in his or her pain, rationally justifying it rather than eliminating it. Such theodicies can only drive us deeper into despair. And the God that lies behind such theodicies can only generate our resentment.¹⁰

A third unsatisfactory theodicy in Kushner's opinion is the one that has God causing or permitting suffering for the sake of some grand design. Perhaps my suffering is allowed or inflicted by the cosmic artist in order to add a dimension of texture and nuance to the world's canvas. My suffering is then justified by the contribution it makes to the aesthetic value of the universe. Kushner is more impressed by this aesthetic theodicy than by those of punishment and pedagogy. But he still has reservations. In the first place he thinks it might be

wishful thinking since we cannot ourselves see any overall pattern of beauty. In the second place it still seems to make God monstrously insensitive to the *particular* suffering of individuals. The individual can only hate a God who sends suffering for the sake of the "grand design."¹¹

Here Kushner's protest is reminiscent of that of the Russian philosopher, Nicolai Berdyaev, who like Ivan Karamazov, was repulsed by the sacrifice of the individual to any universal cosmic harmony:

What values does the very idea of world order, world harmony possess, and could it ever in the least justify the unjust suffering of personality?

...

World harmony is a false and an enslaving idea. One must get free of it for the sake of the dignity of personality.

... God is not world providence, that is to say not a ruler and sovereign of the universe, not *pantocrator*. God is freedom and meaning, love and sacrifice. ... The good news of the approach of the Kingdom of God is set in opposition to the world order. It means the end of false harmony which is founded upon the realm of the common. ... There is no need to justify, we have no right to justify, all the unhappiness, all the suffering and evil in the world with the help of the idea of God as Providence and Sovereign of the Universe.

...

God is in the child which has shed tears, and not in the world order by which those tears are said to be justified.¹²

No world order, aesthetic or otherwise, can justify the suffering of innocents. It is inexcusable that any alleged deity would sacrifice the particular for the sake of the universal.

It might seem to the reader that the present book has proposed just such a theodicy in arguing for an "aesthetic"

understanding of cosmic purpose. Consequently Kushner's critique of the "grand plan" justification of God and suffering would seem to apply also to the "Whiteheadian" approach which holds that "God is the poet of the world." Hence I must address Kushner's complaints.

First Kushner maintains that we have not ourselves seen the whole cosmic tapestry and that it may be wishful thinking to suppose that there is an overall aesthetic pattern that gives a hidden answer to our suffering. Such an hypothesis, he holds, does not respond concretely to our experience of pain. In response to this objection I can only reaffirm what I stated earlier: none of us is able to have a controlling or comprehensive knowledge of any hypothetical higher level of meaning in the cosmic hierarchy or in any supposed universal pattern of beauty. If there is a universal meaning that can make sense of our particular sufferings, we cannot expect to possess such meaning. Such meaning would comprehend us rather than vice versa.

Kushner himself seems to recognize this basic religious truth as exemplified in the Book of Job which he finds to be the most important document ever written on theodicy. Job tries desperately to squeeze God into the framework of the ethical vision, seeking to measure the Almighty according to the familiar criteria of justice and moral order. But when the vision of a God who surpasses Job's narrow expectation of justice appears "out of the whirlwind," Job has to press his hands to his lips in a gesture of silence before the incomprehensible. I do not think that Kushner would deny that all genuine religious experience is characterized by such a sense of the ineffable. Therefore, the demand for clarity of comprehension in the issue of theodicy is out of place as it is in all religious consciousness. I think Kushner would agree.

Kushner's second objection to the "grand design" theodicy is more forceful, however, and we must make it a part of our own aesthetic interpretation. Like Dostoevski and Berdyaev, Kushner finds repugnant any theodicy that sacrifices the individual to the universal. I would like to express my complete

sympathy with this judgment and defend the aesthetic theodicy I have adopted from any association with such a callous approach. I suspect that the source of Kushner's objections lies in the implied image or concept of God in the "grand design" type of theodicy. God is pictured or thought of as actively causing the contradictions and sufferings that give nuance and texture to the cosmic tapestry, (or if not actively causing them, at least refusing to intervene to prevent pain while having the power to do so). And it is the idea of a God who causes or deliberately tolerates evil for the sake of a higher good that justifiably arouses our sense of indignation. For this reason I am in agreement with Kushner when he points out that the real issue concerning why suffering occurs at all is that of God's power.

All three of the theodicies rejected by Kushner have in common the belief that God is the cause of our suffering, for whatever reason. And it is this belief that I would agree must be rejected. But I think it must be rejected on the very grounds of, and not in spite of, an aesthetic view of cosmic meaning. With Kushner I would be willing to say:

Maybe God does not cause our suffering. Maybe it happens for some reason other than the will of God.

...

Could it be that God does not cause the bad things that happen to us? Could it be that He doesn't decide which families shall give birth to a handicapped child, that He did not single out Ron to be crippled by a bullet or Helen by a degenerative disease, but rather that He stands ready to help them and us cope with our tragedies if we could only get beyond the feelings of guilt and anger that separate us from Him? Could it be that "How could God do this to me?" is really the wrong question for us to ask?¹³

It is clear that for Kushner the offensiveness of the theodicies of punishment, pedagogy, and universal harmony consists in their making God the agent of suffering. Kushner is correct, I think, in focusing his critique of these theodicies on the notion of God that underlies them. He is right in maintaining that such

a notion of God can only arouse our hatred. Such a God, we might add, is probably one of the major causes of modern atheism which has been highly sensitive to the "moral view of the universe," with its implied themes of order and punishment.¹⁴

It is because I share with Kushner (and Ricoeur) the conviction that any theodicy based on the "ethical vision" (such as those of punishment, pedagogy and universal harmony) is inadequate that I have suggested we experiment with an aesthetic vision of the cosmos. Therefore, I do not hold out the aesthetic cosmic scheme as a universal for the sake of which it is justifiable to sacrifice the individual. Instead I see the aesthetic teleological vision as one in which we may break out of the confines of the ethical criteria usually employed in theodicies that have proven to be unsatisfactory for the reasons outlined so clearly in Kushner's fine book. The aesthetic teleology I have sketched does not project some abstract universal harmony in which the suffering of individuals becomes justifiable for the sake of adding contrast to the whole cosmic tapestry. The suffering of individuals is never actively willed or desired by the ultimate source of order and novelty. What God wills, in our Whiteheadian scheme, is the fullest possible enjoyment and peace of each entity in the cosmos. The Whiteheadian view envisages God as more oriented toward the fulfillment of the individual than toward the filling out of some cosmic outline.¹⁵ But it insists that the organismic connection of all things makes it impossible for the individual to experience fulfillment apart from the cosmos as a whole. For this reason, then, we cannot disassociate the problem of universal cosmic meaning from that of particular suffering. And so it is inevitable that our reflections on the problem of theodicy move from the individual toward the universal context of the individual's existence. And I would argue that we can more compassionately situate the concrete sufferer in an aesthetic than in an ethical universe.

In our aesthetic teleology the individual's suffering is granted a significance *in terms of* and in the context of a universal cosmic beauty. But this does not mean that the individual's suffering is justified by its potential for contributing

contrast to the wider aesthetic whole. Such a view would make the "cosmic artist" monstrously insensitive, and I think we may categorically reject this idea. I would prefer to begin with the premise that the individual's suffering is never justifiable and is never actively willed or caused by God for the sake of adding beauty to the cosmic work of art. But when suffering does in fact occur (though not intrinsically justifiable) it is capable of being salvaged from sheer meaninglessness by God's aesthetic care. The individual's sufferings are felt by God with unfading sensitivity, even though they are not willed by God. God may not be capable of preventing suffering, but God is infinitely sensitive to particular sufferings, identifies with them, takes them into the divine life and transforms them into an aspect of the beauty of the cosmos in order that they never be forgotten or lost. In this way the individual's sufferings contribute to the universal without being justified by the universal.

Therefore, I can understand Berdyaev when he says that "God is in the child which has shed tears, and not in the world order by which those tears are said to be justified."¹⁶ However, an organismic understanding of the world would prefer a different wording: "God is in the child which has shed tears, and God takes those tears into a pattern of universal beauty where they are rescued from the threat of oblivion." This at least seems to be the spirit of the Whiteheadian approach to the problem of suffering. I think that an ancient Buddhist text from the Mahayana tradition, in portraying the ideal of the bodhisattva, expresses accurately the divine sensitivity to suffering suggested by the Whiteheadian view:

... it is surely better that I alone should be in pain than that all these beings should fall into the state of woe. . . . I must give myself away as a pawn through which the whole world is redeemed . . . and with this my own body I must experience, for the sake of all beings, the whole mass of all painful feelings.¹⁷

Only if God is something like this is the aesthetic teleology acceptable.

Adventure

I have maintained with Kushner that no overarching aesthetic teleology can justify the sufferings of individuals. But it does not follow that an aesthetic teleology cannot redeem and give meaning to individual sufferings when they do in fact occur. Nevertheless we must still ask: Why do they occur at all? Can we give any reasonable answer to this question? Kushner tells us that it may not be appropriate to ask: "How could God do this to me?" But it is certainly appropriate to ask: "What kind of God creates a world in which such things happen to me?" With the help of Whitehead and his followers, I shall propose that this God is a God of adventure and that the alternative would thrust us back into the restrictedness of the ethical vision and its correspondingly narrow, ultimately dehumanizing teleologies and theodicies.

According to modern science our universe appears to be, by all accounts, an adventure. By adventure is meant the universe's search for continually more intense forms of ordered novelty.¹⁸ Ever since the "Big Bang" the cosmos has evolved in such a way that, little by little, more organized complexity has appeared, at least at certain points. We do not know for sure whether life or intelligent life exists elsewhere in the universe, but even if it occurs only here on earth (something which appears unlikely) we can still discern the lines of a progress toward heightened versions of ordered novelty in the cosmic advance. The living cell, for example, has an intensity of ordered complexity that elevates it far above the level of a grain of sand. And the human brain is incomparably more complex in its organization than any other state of matter of which we are aware. We can measure the progress of the cosmic adventure in terms of the criteria of harmony and complexity or of order and novelty. The criterion of adventure is the *intensity* with which the world strives to hold these contrasts together. The more adventurous the world's advance, the more possibility exists of intense syntheses of order with novelty appearing on the cosmic landscape. Because of the adventurous nature of the cosmos eventually life appeared, then consciousness, then civili-

zation. Whatever else this cosmic adventure leads to (further expansion of consciousness? planetary unification? inter-galactic communication?) we can safely say that it would take the form of a heightening of the intensity of ordered novelty. It would continue the trend of intensifying cosmic Beauty.

If we are to speak of God at all today, then, we must correlate the idea of God with that of the cosmic adventure. Modern religious thought has not yet been able to do so in a completely satisfactory way. Whitehead and Polanyi are two of the few thinkers who have made significant strides in attempting such a correlation. They also leave many questions unanswered, but if theology is to relate itself to the facts of cosmology in the future, I think it will have to carry on the task begun by such original thinkers as these.

In the past the idea of God has been closely associated with that of cosmic order, but not often with the fact of novelty. As a result of developments in modern science we are much more aware than our theological predecessors were of the extent to which novelty continually pours into the world process. It is the fact of novelty that pulls our universe toward its adventurous experimentation with fresh forms of order in its evolution. We now must ask, more forcefully than ever before, what the idea of God has to do with the fact of novelty.

We have continually referred to God in this book as "source of order *and* novelty." But this does not make the task of theodicy any easier. For in understanding God as the source of novelty we have apparently made God responsible for the fact of evil. Let us recall that the influx of novelty into any orderly situation will inevitably disrupt that order and threaten it with the possibility of chaos. But chaos is evil; therefore, God seems to be responsible for much of what we call evil.¹⁹

It is tempting to revert, then, to the traditional idea that God is only source of order and to associate novelty with some other, perhaps even demonic, aspect of the universe. Much that passes as "religion" does exactly this. It refers to God as the upholder of cosmic order, an order usually framed in terms of the ethical vision, and it attributes whatever evil arises in the universe to the invasion of novelty. Such religion defends the

status quo at all costs, identifies faith in God with staunch conservatism, and associates "civilized" life with stony immobility in the face of revisionist efforts.

Given the fact that innovation, especially in the area of human affairs, usually brings much immediate suffering even when its purpose is to eliminate suffering in the long run, it is easy to understand and even sympathize with the effort to associate God only with cosmic and ethical order. Revolutionaries often bring loss of life and property; visionaries are the most disturbing of all people since their entertainment of new possibilities always implies that the present order has to be overcome. So if we associate God with the realm of new possibilities we should not wonder that this God is disturbing. It might be easier to live with the God of punishment since punishment exists primarily to uphold a given order. We are willing to tolerate the idea that suffering is always the penalty for our violations of this order rather than interpret suffering as the result of the presence of novelty in the cosmic adventure. Even though biblical religion has always understood God as the source of novelty ("Behold, I make all things new"), classical theologies have predominantly associated God with cosmic order and have failed to consider in any depth the connection between God and novelty.

If we accept the world-in-process of modern science, however, we can no longer ignore the relationship of God to the novelty that renders our cosmos into an adventure. Novelty can no longer be understood as an accidental modification of order. Instead it is intrinsic to the very actuality of things. Each actual occasion is constituted by the way it feels its past. But it experiences its past (conformally or non-conformally) only in a manner shaped by its sensitivity to the new. Novelty is an aspect of each occasion. It is an essential metaphysical dimension in the process we call the universe. In fact our notion of "order" is usually the result of our abstracting from the cosmic process and freezing it into a pattern that has already dissolved and been replaced by another. "Cosmic order" can only be understood as a generalized representation of a process of

successive new patternings of experience. Novelty, then, cannot be dismissed as incidental or secondary to order.²⁰

Hence, we can no longer avoid thinking of God as source of novelty as well as order. God is the lure that arouses the cosmos toward adventure, constantly awakening it from the inertia that would fix it into any given order. It is because of this divine disturbance that the universe has the character of adventure which we constantly attempt to domesticate with our petty versions of ethical harmony. We find it extremely difficult to identify and coincide with the divine restlessness inherent in the cosmos. Some religious traditions, especially Buddhism, have taught that we will never find ultimate peace until we affirm this restlessness and cease our idolatrous substantializing of things and ourselves. It may take a lifetime for us to realize, as John Dunne puts it, that "... the only cure for the restlessness ... is ... a Yes to the restlessness itself."²¹ For the most part our "religious" life seems to be most comfortable with the feeling that the present order is eternally validated. To associate religion with adventure may seem to us to be the very antithesis of what we may have taken religion to be.

Whitehead often observes how we tend to substitute a sketch for the whole picture, how we prematurely close off our openness to the cosmos and narrow ourselves down in adjusting to a mere fragment of the whole. We become fixated on a particular version of cosmic order apparently in order to avoid the evil of chaos that accompanies the urge to novelty. But in our obsession with order we succumb to monotony and triviality. Whitehead does not hesitate to call this unnecessary acquiescence in monotony an "evil" also. Evil, he says, "... is the brute motive force of fragmentary purpose, disregarding the eternal vision."²² Evil, therefore, cannot be exclusively identified with chaos and perishing. It is a term applicable just as much to unnecessary triviality. Chaos and disorder constitute, of course, one form of evil. But another kind of evil belongs to those situations where a more intense harmony of novel contrasts is attainable and yet there is a reluctance to move toward a richer synthesis. "There is then the evil of triviality—a

sketch in place of a full picture."²³ The aim toward beauty may be frustrated not only by the collapse into disorder as the result of too much novelty, but also by acquiescence in triviality when the appropriation of novelty is relevant. It is infidelity to the cosmic adventure to cling to low-grade forms of harmony, to remain stuck in monotony, when further advance is possible.

If the ultimate value is beauty, understood as the highest relevant synthesis of order and novelty, then it follows that too much order is just as evil as is too much novelty. Therefore, the identification of God only with order is a serious misunderstanding in our religion and theology. Such an identification is in large measure the source of the atrocities committed by humans throughout history in the name of God. The association of God only with some particular form of order has not in fact rescued God from complicity in evil any more than does the association of God with novelty.

It seems to me that it is only when God is understood as source of order *and* novelty that God is "justifiable" in terms of the problem of suffering. We could not rationally justify the existence of a God who was only the source of order since then we would wonder why the Orderer does not eliminate the disorder of suffering. Nor could we accept the idea of God as only source of novelty, since novelty without order is mere chaos. The only realistic picture of the universe we can have is one in which there is both order and chaos, one in which chaos is just as primordial as is order.²⁴ If we begin with this fact and keep returning to it, then we will be able to render the idea of God compatible with the cosmos after all, including its experiences of pain.

We can do so, however, only if we understand God in terms of Adventure. "God's purpose in the creative advance is the evocation of intensities."²⁵ God does not directly will chaos. God wills only the magnification of Beauty and the highest possible enjoyment of beauty and peace relevant to every actuality in the universe. God does not want suffering to occur, but rather wills the well-being of all things. But God does not settle for mere survival. Instead God wills the *maximum* aesthetic enjoyment relevant to each individual entity. In order for this maxi-

mum to be attainable, however, each entity must be receptive to novelty without which its present status becomes unaesthetic, unenjoyable. But in opening itself to the adventure of appropriating novelty each entity runs the risk of disintegration. Creative advance, Whitehead says, takes place only along the borders of chaos.²⁶ In the transition from triviality toward intensity of enjoyment there is always the risk of the evil of disorder. Evil is "the half-way house" between monotony and maximum enjoyment.²⁷ The cosmic adventure requires such a risk.

So it must be admitted that in maximizing the aesthetic intensity of the cosmos and of the experiences that make up the cosmos, God may be held responsible for at least some of the chaos that occurs in the cosmic process.²⁸ If God had not lured the process further in the direction of expanding its value (beauty), life and consciousness would never have appeared in evolution. And if life and consciousness had not appeared, then there would have been no such experience as suffering. Then we would not have any "theodicy problem." This would certainly have been one possible "solution."

Since this is not a very realistic option, however, we are still faced with the spectre of God's apparent complicity with evil in luring the cosmos to such a level of intensity that suffering becomes a possibility. John Cobb and David Griffin have approached this question by making a distinction between "responsibility" and "indictability," and at the present time I am attracted to their proposed clarification of God's relation to the fact of suffering. They insist that while God is partly responsible for much of what we call evil (meaning, I assume, that the reality of a persuasive God as source of novelty is a necessary condition of the world's creative advance), this does not mean that God is morally indictable. For it is the very "goodness" of God, manifested in a concern for maximum enjoyment for each actuality, that brings about a situation in which the evil of disorder becomes a possibility. God is not indictable for our suffering, even though were it not for God there would be no such experience as suffering in the first place. If God had not lured the cosmos toward the levels of life

and consciousness nothing like suffering could have ever occurred. So in this sense God is responsible for suffering. But this does not mean that God is morally reprehensible. For God can apparently be none other than a God of Adventure.²⁹

Unable to settle for the adequacy of the status quo, this God is concerned with the maximum possible fulfillment of the world and the actualities that constitute it. Our individual sufferings are never directly willed or caused by this God of Adventure. But in the world's and our own quest for beauty and peace suffering may and will occur. I doubt if we can make any sense at all of our suffering if we attempt to situate it outside of the adventurous universe of which we are a part. It is certainly difficult enough to do so even in this context, and I realize that there are many more questions raised by this chapter than I am able to respond to. Nonetheless, I think our cosmology of adventure provides a more realistic and humane setting within which to discuss the issue of theodicy than does the typical context of a fixed ethical order.

Conclusion

Why do bad things happen to good people? Rabbi Kushner suggests that there can really be no "answer." "We can offer learned explanations, but in the end, when we have covered all the squares on the game board and are feeling very proud of our cleverness, the pain and the anguish and the sense of unfairness will still be there."³⁰ But while there can be no answer in the form of an explanation, there may still be a "response" on our part to a world in which suffering occurs and to the God who seems to be helpless in the face of our suffering. I think Kushner has captured the spirit of the Whiteheadian approach, though his book displays no explicit familiarity with it; and so it is fitting that we end this chapter by quoting from the conclusion to his book:

Life is not fair. The wrong people get sick and the wrong people get robbed and the wrong people get killed in wars

and accidents. Some people see life's unfairness and decide, "There is no God; the world is nothing but chaos." Others see the same unfairness and ask themselves, "Where do I get my sense of what is fair and unfair? Where do I get my sense of outrage and indignation ...? Don't I get these things from God? ... Our responding to life's unfairness with sympathy and with righteous indignation, God's compassion and God's anger working through us, may be the surest proof of all of God's reality."³¹

Loop - One of the turns
comprising a spiral
or helix.

Field - a region of space
characterized by a
physical property having
a determinable value

Long - long of the turn
comprising a special
of the

field - a region of space
characterized by a
physical property having
a characteristic value

at every point in the region
System - a group of interacting
interrelated or interdependent
elements forming a
collective entity.

imaginatively create our worlds symbolically and that we often do so erroneously. But I shall argue that we will seriously misinterpret our symbols unless we simultaneously view them within the more comprehensive framework of cosmology.

What, then, would be the nature of symbolic expression when defined in terms of our cosmological considerations? We may respond to this question by employing both the aesthetic and the hierarchical conceptions of the universe. (1) In the aesthetic scheme symbols "hold together" the world as it is felt in primary perception with the world as it is sensed immediately in secondary perception. (2) And in the hierarchical view symbols "hold together" the level of our human consciousness with the higher level that seeks to comprehend and integrate our consciousness (in its response of faith) into itself. Let me elaborate on each of these without giving the impression that either Whitehead or Polanyi would necessarily follow me here in my speculation.

I. Symbolism and Cosmic Beauty

In the aesthetic way of understanding the universe, the intrinsic value that resides in the whole pattern of the cosmos (most of it hidden from immediate awareness) impinges directly on our primary perception. We are affected by this value in a subliminal mode of causal feeling, and so we are usually not vividly aware of its impact upon us. Nonetheless, the ingre-dience of this universal aesthetic value in our primary feeling has a concrete effect upon us. It is causally efficacious in constituting us as the kind of beings we are. Concretely our being affected by this cosmic value gives us our tendency toward trust. It is in our native capacity to trust and our instinctive sense that life is worth living that we give evidence of our primordial connection to a cosmos that is intrinsically valuable.⁸ Much recent research, especially in psychology, has highlighted this capacity we have for "basic trust" and has emphasized its indispensability for our personal development.⁹ My conjecture here is that there are cosmological grounds for our tendency to trust consisting of the value that is inherent in

the patterning of experiences that we call the universe. In our primary perception we feel ourselves linked to this universe of importance, even though clarity and distinctness are not attributes of this feeling.

Yet each of our lives is comprised of only a tiny fragment of the entire patterning which, woven together in ever newer syntheses, issues forth as our universe. Because of the narrowness and perishability of the route of occasions comprising our own lives, we command no secure vision of the universal pattern in its nuance, intensity and massiveness. Such a vision belongs only to God whose inner experience embraces the totality of cosmic experience. Consequently, owing to the restrictedness of our individual perspectives and the finiteness of our particular existence we are likely at times to shrink reality down to those aspects which we can easily abstract from or correlate with our own limited experience. And in doing this we may lose at the conscious level any sense of the intrinsic value of the whole. We may, in other words, be tempted to distrust. Distrust is possible whenever there is a weakening of the connection between the intrinsic value of reality and our own consciousness. This weakening can occur for any number of reasons, most of them having to do with the relationships we have with other persons in our immediate environment.

Even in the most extreme conditions of wounded trust, however, our causal connection with the intrinsic value of the universe is not completely severed. It is an axiom of organismic cosmology that no one is an island; even in our estrangement from others and from the cosmos (as imagined perhaps along the lines of dualism and cosmic pessimism) we are still being influenced inevitably by the totality of which we are a part. Our primary perception, which lies beyond our conscious or willful control, organically relates us to the totality, a totality that exists only inasmuch as it is patterned, a totality whose reality is, therefore, its aesthetic value. By virtue of our being part of this aesthetic whole we can never be alienated completely from its inherent value; and the fact of our being perpetually tied into it by our primary perception ensures that we can never be cut off from the metaphysical-cosmological basis of our trust-

ing. That such a link between ourselves and cosmic value abides continuously is borne forth in our "prototypical gestures" of laughing, playing, hoping, ordering our lives, and especially in our continuing to ask questions. All of these spontaneous gestures occur only because of a fundamental trust that reality is valuable and that our lives are worth living.¹⁰

I have just sketched the outlines of an aesthetic cosmology indicating how each of us is tied into the cosmos through the mode of primary perception. I have reasoned (on the basis of the Whiteheadian ideas outlined in previous chapters) that we each have a subliminal feeling of the value that gives substance and actuality to the cosmic whole. But it is precisely because this feeling remains for the most part buried beneath the level of our immediate awareness that we need symbolic expression to bring this value into our conscious awareness so as to bolster and vivify our capacity to trust. We are now in a position, therefore, to specify how symbols function cosmologically.

It is through symbols, those of art, poetry and especially religion, that the intrinsic value of cosmic reality insinuates itself into the conscious experience of those organisms that we call human beings. Since these organisms are themselves creative and imaginative and are co-producers of symbols along with their fellows, their own symbolic creations add nuance, novelty and complexity to the cosmos of which they are a part. I am not entirely denying the validity of the psychological (and socio-cultural-historical) evaluation of what is involved in the fabrication of symbols, myths and stories. All I am emphasizing is that the production of symbols, like all mental occurrences, is first and foremost a cosmological event. And such an event fulfills a cosmic function. This function is to impress the value of the whole on some of the parts, specifically the human organisms, in a manner relevant to the cultural, historical and psychological situation of these organic participants in the cosmic process. Each actual occasion feels the universe's reality in a manner relevant to its experiential depth. In our human experience the reality (value) of the whole is felt at the pole of primary perception. But we also have the capacity to experience reality more clearly at the secondary pole of perception. And so

our connection with the importance of things needs to be brought closer to the surface. It is the function of religious symbols in particular to bring the inherent purposefulness of the universe out of the mistiness of primary perception and into a mode of representation that can be correlated with the world of sense perception. But because the world of sense perception is too shallow to contain the depth of importance resident in the whole of reality the symbols which employ material from this shallow world (as their first intentionality) always remain somewhat off-shore in deeper waters where they appear to us only in a refracted visage. In this obscure position they "hold together" the worlds of primary and secondary perception. Symbols stand somewhere between the clear but trivial world of secondary perception and the cloudy but important world of primary perception. Given the polar nature of our perception of reality we should expect that there would be such an intermediary region of representation. And it is in this range that we find the symbolic expression of religions.

Therefore, we should not expect our religious symbols to have the clarity of scientific discourse which deals predominantly with the world that can be correlated with secondary perception. Religious symbolism strives to retrieve a universal dimension of importance that cannot be articulated with mathematical rigor. We may say, then, that religion and science are complementary modes of discourse, each related to different poles of the perceptive process. They will appear as contradictory only if we fall back into the prejudice that reduces all perception to what can be clearly grasped by the senses.

Our understanding the symbolic process in terms of the bipolar theory of perception avoids the one-sidedness of an exclusively psychological or subjectivist location of religious symbolism. It undermines the possibility of our seeing symbols as mere projections. It does so by recognizing their power and indispensability for putting us in touch with the intrinsic value (which is the reality) of things. By interpreting the symbolic process cosmologically we may envisage reality (the aesthetic whole) rather than our subjectivity as taking the initiative, first by linking us to itself in our primary perception and second by

flowing through the channels of our perception until it comes closer to the pole of secondary perception (without ever quite arriving) where it can impress its importance upon us in a more vivid manner. By utilizing objects which can be correlated with sense experience symbolism mediates cosmic value to us. As reality becomes more clearly ingredient in our experience it clothes itself in those enticing and elusive configurations that we call symbols. As it moves from the vagueness of the pole of primary perception toward the crispness of the pole of secondary perception reality assumes a particularity that will appeal to our specific personal, historical and cultural experience. It does so by entrusting itself to symbols which "throw together" universality and particularity. In this sense we may appreciate symbols as revelatory of the ultimate importance (of reality) while at the same time we acknowledge our own creatively imaginative input into their production.

Anything can function as a symbol through which the depth, importance and ultimate beauty of reality discloses itself. A person, a group, an historical event, a word or a set of words, an animal, a rock, a dream etc.—any of these is capable of functioning symbolically, of mediating to us a purposefulness that transcends us and gives significance to our lives. There is no doubt that the complicity of our own imagination is a requirement of the effectiveness of these things to symbolize. But this does not mean that symbols are nothing but our imaginings. It is likely that we will be tempted toward such a reductionist position only if we have already assumed that the universe is intrinsically valueless. And it has been the main objective of the present work to challenge this assumption.

Suspicion

I think we should specify once again the cultural and philosophical background out of which the typical, psychologically biased understanding of symbols has arisen. For it is one in which most of the assumptions we have challenged in this

book have reigned supreme. First it takes for granted the dichotomy of a meaning-creating subject situated over against an inherently valueless world. Accordingly symbols have been understood in modernity primarily from the point of view of the isolated epistemological subject. And this is why, in our age, there has been so much suspicion of the realism of symbolic expression. If symbols are primarily or exclusively the productions of a subject, then they probably lack objectivity. Hence they seem unrealistic.

Secondly, this psychological-subjectivist understanding of symbolism assumes the primacy of sense perception and the supremacy of clear and distinct ideas. Hence the misty world toward which symbols point and the opaqueness of this realm of ambiguity to clear logical articulation renders the symbols themselves somewhat suspect. Perhaps they are important steps toward clear understanding, but eventually they must be abandoned in the interest of a more lucid understanding of reality. More and more, symbolic expressions of all types, poetic, artistic, mythic-narrative and religious, have aroused the suspicion that they mask an underlying lack of realism, that they conceal ideological bias, fear, weakness or even hatred. And this suspicion has typically demanded that we move beyond the spuriousness of symbolism out into the clear light of daytime consciousness.

Again I would emphasize that there is a great deal of value in this suspicion. It is indeed possible for us to hide beneath our symbolism, to idolatize it and thus to restrict our own understanding of the real world. Because of our propensity to misread our symbols we need a "hermeneutic of suspicion" to unveil our misplaced trust.¹¹ And yet it would be a mistake to interpret symbolism simply as a subjectivist, capricious and unnecessary mistake. The masters of suspicion are themselves part of a world that has been symbolically mediated through the myths of dualism, of tragedy or of utopian expectation. Marx, Nietzsche, Freud and their followers do not themselves recognize the degree to which their own courage of suspicion rides the tide of symbolic-mythic undercurrents in Western

we may have to the hierarchical vision has itself been aroused in us by symbols themselves. Without our having been drawn toward a higher or deeper meaning by a concrete set of symbols expressed in a specific historical-cultural context we would have no inkling of ultimate purpose or of the hierarchical nature of reality. Through a specific set of narrative symbols ultimate meaning has already comprehended our consciousness and stimulated our reflection in the direction of conceiving the universe in a hierarchical fashion. "The symbol gives rise to thought."¹² In our surrender to the symbol we have already acceded to the hierarchical conception.

This may seem to involve us in a vicious circle: an appreciation of hierarchy requires an attraction to symbols which in turn draw us toward the hierarchical view. Admittedly this is a circle. Whether it is "vicious" or not, again, depends upon whether we are content with being encircled. That is, are we willing to accept that in some sense we are always comprehended by a circle of meaning that surrounds us and which we cannot get around, a circle to which we can contribute new meanings but which we cannot ourselves circumscribe? To place ourselves inside such a circle involves a risk, a "wager."¹³ To imagine that our consciousness lies outside of such a circle also involves a risk. In this book I have argued that the former risk is the one more consistent with an organic universe and the cosmic adventure as it has been portrayed by modern science.

I cannot deny, therefore, that my own attraction to a hierarchical vision of reality is a consequence of my already having been taken into a specific circle of historically and culturally conditioned symbols. In my case this symbolic context is Christianity. And in the following chapter I shall sketch the relationship, as I see it, between Christian ideas of God and the aesthetic-hierarchical cosmology described above.

Conclusion

The languages of science and religion may be seen as complementary to each other. They are opposed to each other

only if we make sense perception our fundamental access to reality or if we reject a hierarchical conception of the universe.

In our aesthetic model with its allied bipolar theory of perception, we can find an illuminative value in each mode of discourse, science or religion. Religious symbolism relates us especially to the intrinsic importance of reality as we feel it primordially grounding our being and becoming at the pole of primary perception. It is at this pole that all beings experience God as the silent horizon of their actuality, as the source of their intrinsic order, as the lure summoning them toward self-transcendence and, finally, as the care into which their existence is ultimately synthesized.¹⁴ Religious symbolism represents this felt ultimacy and care by couching it in images that we may correlate with the secondary pole of perception and with our concretely limited historical experience. Because of the relative shallowness of the world as grasped in secondary perception our symbols, which borrow their first intentionality from this immediate world of sensation, are never adequate to their second intentionality. Thus they must constantly be revised in accordance with the demands of the cosmic adventure as it advances toward deeper intensity of beauty and as its freshness is deposited in primary perception. When this revision is resisted our symbols degenerate into idols which support the "evil of triviality" and which, therefore, require the criticisms we find in the likes of Marx, Nietzsche and Freud.

In this same aesthetic model we may also locate the complementary role of science. Science hovers more closely around the secondary pole of perception. This means that science deals with a much more abstract aspect of the world than does religion. Science typically disassociates its "facts" from "value." And since value, resident in the aesthetic patterning which gives actuality to all things, is the reality of things, any approach which neglects this value must be considered abstract rather than concrete.

Science, then, deals with "high abstractions." This observation may prove offensive to many who think that science deals more concretely with the world than does any other approach, especially religion. But our observation is not intended as a

Is this true?

terns. The figure of Jesus as the Christ, as it is portrayed in the Gospels and as it is imitated and re-embodied in contemporary lives, has drawn numerous people into a circle of restored trust and hope. It has done so, I suspect, because it is a representation of universal beauty in a manner proportionate to a people's experience at this time in the evolution of the universe. At a time when our primordial trust has been weakened due to our experience of suffering, mortality, guilt and the threat of meaninglessness, an encounter with this picture is capable of allowing us to trust once again that we are cared for and that reality is not indifferent to our deepest longings.

In the story of Jesus the Christian is attracted to the expansiveness of the man from Nazareth who reaches out in the broadest possible way in order to integrate into his life the widest variety of people and experiences. The integration and harmonizing of contrasts is what gives his life a beauty that is compelling and healing to the believer, and that leads the Christian to understand him as the embodiment of ultimate beauty, as somehow divine. The story pictures Jesus as embracing tax collectors, prostitutes, rich and poor, the socially respected and the socially rejected, women as well as men, children and adults, heretics along with the orthodox, the sick and the healthy. He is pictured as himself a story-teller in whose stories there is equally vivid harmonizing of contrasts: a father embracing a prodigal son, a tax collector praying for forgiveness; a heretic showing a compassion far surpassing that of the orthodox, an employer rewarding laggards with the same wages as those who have worked a full day. Jesus' imagination is full of such jarring juxtapositions. And, the story goes, Jesus' own existence synthesizes the apparent contradictions of a healthy love for life with an attitude of openness to execution. It is the harmony of such sharp contrasts that summons forth our appreciation of this man. It is not finally Jesus' ethical teachings (which are not for the most part unique to him in any case) that inspire faith in him. Rather it is his relativizing of the ethical by his proclamation of a higher goodness that embraces both good and evil, the moral and the immoral. In short, it is the aesthetic dimension, the beauty portrayed in the

mind and story of Jesus that calls forth a distinctively religious rather than merely ethical response from the Christian believer.

Unfortunately, though, much of Christianity has reduced Jesus to an ethical preacher. While he was certainly concerned that our life-style give expression in right behavior to our trust in God, ethics was not Jesus' primary preoccupation. Rather it was the "Reign of God," a symbol representing the Jewish hope for ultimate fulfillment and peace. This was the symbol for a time when lion would lie down with lamb, when swords would become plowshares, when the poor would possess the earth, when old men would turn to dreaming. In brief, once again, it was a symbol for the deepest possible harmony of contrasts. Jesus' prophetic vocation was to impress on people how an ultimate beauty was already breaking into their lives. He did not pretend that its appearance would be a gentle one. Instead he fully expected it to release a certain amount of chaos. And yet his hope was for a wider peace beyond the chaos. Christians today still, at times at least, share this hope.

However, to a great extent what passes as Christianity confines us to the ethical instead of opening us to the aesthetic. Sermons and religious education seem to focus more on rules of conduct than on opening our eyes to the contrasts the story of Jesus displays. Ethical concerns are an important dimension of Christian life, but they are not the ultimate horizon of faith. The ultimate horizon of faith and hope is a universal beauty. And it is our being drawn toward the spectre of eschatological beauty that gives rise to our moral aspiration in the first place. If we try to establish an ethic of duty independently of our hope for ultimate beauty, then the ethic will become an intolerable burden. The vision must precede the moral imperatives or else the imperatives will become demonic. Much contemporary atheism seems to be more aware of this fact than are many Christians.

It is partly because Christians have portrayed Jesus too dominantly in ethical terms that they leave themselves open to the suspicion of modern critics of religion. The modern rediscovery that Jesus was more preoccupied with eschatology than with morality should accordingly cause us to reassess how the

figure of Jesus fits in relation to the universe. Jesus' eschatological obsession was one in which the evil in the world is not rooted out and separated from the good. Rather his vision was one in which we should allow the weeds to remain along with the wheat, one in which God allows the sun to shine on both the just and the unjust. There is no moralistic segregating of the innocent from the dark side of life. The aesthetic urge to harmonize contrasts wins out over the ethical impulse to destroy evil outright. In this attitude, then, Jesus symbolizes for the Christian the intensity and expansiveness of universal beauty that characterizes ultimate reality. He did not strive simply to tell us how to behave but, even more, to open our eyes to the wider vision. His assumption was that if we are drawn to that vision our behavior will be shaped accordingly. But he seriously objected to those who attempt to reshape our conduct in the absence of such a vision.

Therefore, Jesus insisted that the love of God for the world was comprehensive and unconditional. It embraced all contrasts in the urge for more intense unity. It is in the same spirit that subsequent Christian theological reflection has insisted that God also embraces suffering and even death as aspects of the divine life. In its teaching that God identifies with the crucified man it proclaims in effect that omnipotence empties itself and takes the form of utter weakness and helplessness. No wider or sharper contrast can be imagined than that the infinite embrace the nothingness of death. In this sense, Christian theology that focuses on the "crucified God" also presents the vision of universal beauty incipient in the teachings of and about Jesus.

No doubt it is because I am myself attracted to this vision that I have highlighted the aesthetic approach to cosmology, teleology and theodicy throughout this book. It is the image of a suffering God presented in the symbolism of Christian faith that has led me toward Whitehead's thought as an approach to cosmology which corresponds in most respects with the Christian symbolism. I would now like to show how the hierarchical model of the universe allows us further to unravel this imagery of divine vulnerability in a cosmological setting.

II. Christianity in an Emergent Universe

In the emergent hierarchy of nature each higher level dwells in and relies upon subsidiaries that constitute the lower level. For example, life dwells in and relies upon chemical processes which have to occur in a predictable and orderly manner in order for life to appear and function. This means that there is a certain "vulnerability" of the higher level in relation to a lower. Life seems to have a sort of power over the chemical level in that it is capable of integrating and organizing chemical processes into specific sequences that give it the character of life. But, at the same time, the incarnation of life in the cosmos is dependent upon the reliable performance of chemical processes. Life is fragile because of its vulnerability to being destroyed whenever there is a breakdown at the chemical level. If this vulnerability is a characteristic of all "higher" levels in their relation to the lower, then there are also theological consequences to be drawn from this condition.

The vulnerability of higher levels to malfunctions at the lower seems to intensify as we move up the ladder of emergence. Our mental processes depend for their successful achievements upon the reliable workings of biotic and physiological functions in our bodies, which in turn rely upon chemical processes. The latter in turn rely upon physical laws which themselves are orderings of quantum occurrences. The instability of entities increases as we ascend the hierarchy in the direction of human consciousness. Our conscious achievements depend for their success on an exceedingly complex hierarchy of assemblies of subassemblies. Such a ladder of ascending intensification gives an acute fragility to our humanly mental life.

Of course it is also true that a certain amount of stability is part of the very nature of hierarchies in that hierarchical structuring prevents the collapse of the whole edifice if there is a local disturbance at one of the levels. The hierarchical ordering of nature assures us that the world will not be reduced to sheer chaos every time there is a small breakdown at one level. The now famous analogy of computer scientist Herbert Simon clari-

